

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5185

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 1967

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP, PFOR, EGEN, US, KU, XF (ALBERT, CARL)

SUBJ: VISIT OF HOUSE SPEAKER ALBERT TO KUWAIT

REF: KUWAIT 1786

SUMMARY: SPEAKER CARL ALBERT HAD SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO KUWAIT APRIL 19-21 MEETING WITH AMIR, PRIME MINISTER AND SEVERAL OTHER KEY MINISTERS. AMIR AND PRIME MINISTER AVOIDED DEEP DISCUSSION OF SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES AND DESCRIBED BILATERAL RELATIONS AS GOOD. MINISTER OF DEFENSE AVOIDED SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES ALTOGETHER. FINANCE MINISTER, HOWEVER, GAVE A STERN LECTURE DURING WHICH HE EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER EFFORTS IN UNNAMED GROUPS IN US TO UNDERMINE EXPANDING US-ARAB RELATIONS. HE ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER LEVEL OF US ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL. SOMEWHAT SURPRISINGLY, ATEEQI URGED US TO SUPPORT SADAT FULLY. HE CLAIMED THAT BASICALLY THERE WERE NO IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES OF SUBSTANCE BETWEEN SADAT AND ASSAD. US BUSINESSMEN EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER RAMIFICATIONS OF RECENT US ANTI-ARAB BOYCOTT MEASURES. EMBASSY CONSIDERS THAT VISIT WENT WELL AND WAS TIMELY REMINDER TO KUWAITI OFFICIALS AND PUBLIC THAT KUWAIT-US RELATIONS ARE BASICALLY GOOD AND THAT WE SHARE MANY IDEALS AND INTERESTS. END SUMMARY.

1. SPEAKER CARL ALBERT MADE BRIEF BUT BUSY VISIT TO KUWAIT

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APRIL 19-21. AS NOTED REFTTEL, HE IS HIGHEST RANKING US OFFICIAL

TO HAVE VISITED KUWAIT SINCE VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW STOPPED HERE IN 1971. KUWAITIS WERE DELIGHTED, AND MR. ALBERT ATTRACTED PROMINENT MEDIA ATTENTION WHILE HE WAS HERE.

2. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEAKER KHALID AL-GHUNAIM WAS KUWAITI HOST FOR UNOFFICIAL VISIT. DURING FIRST EVENING CODEL MET INFORMALLY WITH EMBASSY COUNTRY TEAM AT DINNER AT HOME OF A/DCM. FULL SCHEDULE FOLLOWED NEXT DAY WITH CALLS ON AMIR, THE PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTERS OF DEFENSE AND FINANCIAL MINISTERS OF OIL AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS WERE NOT AVAILABLE AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DID NOT SIT APRIL 20 SO SPEAKER ALBERT WAS NOT ABLE TO BE INTRODUCED TO THAT BODY. CHARGE HOSTED LUNCHEON APRIL 20 AND LATER IN AFTERNOON MR. ALBERT ADDRESSED LOCAL AFRICAN BUSINESS

AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY. IN EVENING GHUNAIM HOSTED DINNER. THESE THREE EVENTS WERE WELL ATTENDED BY MINISTERS AND OTHERS, ALTHOUGH SPEAKER ALBERT HAD TO COMPETE WITH HIGH LEVEL OFFICIAL VISITORS FROM BAHRAIN AND YUGOSLAVIA.

3. IN GENERAL KUWAITIS AVOIDED DEEP DISCUSSION OF SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES. AMIR SAID US-KUWAIT BILATERAL RELATIONS WERE GOOD, ALTHOUGH HE NOTED THAT PROBLEMS EXIST WITH RESPECT TO GENERAL ARAB-AMERICAN RELATIONS. CROWN PRINCE/PRIME MINISTER REITERATED THESE THEMES. HE MENTIONED BUT DID NOT DWELL ON "TECHNICAL" PROBLEMS RELATED TO INVESTMENTS AND ARMS PURCHASES. HE ALSO ALLUDED TO REGIONAL ARAB CONCERNS WITHOUT GOING INTO DETAIL OR SPENDING MUCH TIME ON THESE POINTS. MINISTER OF DEFENSE SHAIKH SAAD AVOIDED SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS ALTOGETHER.

4. AS EXPECTED, MOST SERIOUS AND DIFFICULT CONVERSATION WAS WITH FINANCE MINISTER ATEEQI. DURING HOUR-LONG DISCUSSION, ESSENTIALLY AN ATEEQI LECTURE, THE KUWAITI FINANCE MINISTER FOCUSED ON PALESTINIAN ISSUES AND US POLICY IN THE REGION. HE PREFACED HIS REMARKS WITH A WARNING THAT HE WOULD BE FRANK, BUT ALSO INDICATED THAT HE FELT HE COULD BE FRANK BECAUSE OF THE UNDERLYING FRIENDSHIP TOWARDS US AND MUTUALITY OF KUWAITI AND AMERICAN INTERESTS. ATEEQI CONCENTRATED ON TWO THEMES. HE SAID THAT THERE WAS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING ON ARAB VIEWS IN THE US NOW, BUT HE SENSED ATTEMPTS AMONG THOSE WITH AN INTEREST

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TO DO SO IN UNDERMINING US-ARAB RELATIONS WHEREVER POSSIBLE. HE CITED EXAMPLES, SUCH AS PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF AND CRITICISM IN SOME QUARTERS OF KUWAIT'S DEPOSITS IN US BANKS; ATEEQI ALSO ARGUED THAT IT WAS NOT US SUPPORT OF ISRAEL THAT CONCERNED HIM, BUT THE LEVEL OF US SUPPORT THAT ALLOWED ISRAEL TO BE INTRANSIGENT AND TO HARM ARABS. ON THE POSSIBILITIES FOR EXILE IN THE REGION, ATEEQI, SPEAKING PERSONALLY, SAID THAT HE WAS NOT QUOTE A SADAT MAN UNQUOTE BUT HE URGED THE US TO SUPPORT SADAT FULLY.

HE DOWNPLAYED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SADAT AND ASSAD. TENOR AND SUBSTANCE OF ATEEQI'S REMARKS WERE IRRITATING AND, AT TIMES, ALMOST OFFENSIVE.

5. ATEEQI DID NOT HAVE MUCH TO SAY ON ECONOMIC QUESTIONS, ALTHOUGH HE REFERRED GENERALLY TO THE WIDE NEED AND SCOPE FOR ARAB AND US COOPERATION. HE WAS CRITICAL OF RECENT ANTI-ARAB BOYCOTT MOVES IN THE US, AND HE SAID ARABS WOULD NOT ALTER THEIR VIEWS. HE STATED FAMILIAR ARAB POSITION THAT BOYCOTT WAS AN EXAMPLE OF ECONOMIC WARFARE. ATEEQI CLAIMED US MEASURES HAD CAUSED MANY KUWAITI BUSINESSMEN TO CANCEL ORDERS, AND LATER IN CONVERSATIONS WITH US BUSINESSMEN, SPEAKER ALBERT WAS TOLD OF INCREASING CONCERN AMONG US BUSINESSMEN HERE OVER RAMIFICATIONS OF BOYCOTT ACTIONS. SPECIFICALLY, AMERICAL MANAGER (OKLAHOMA BORN) OF BILLION DOLLAR KUWAIT GAS UTILIZATION PROJECT TOLD SPEAKER US FIRMS WERE AFRAID OF BREAKING LAW AND THEREFORE WERE UNABLE TO PROVIDE CERTAIN BOYCOTT-RELATED DOCUMENTATION WHICH IS REQUIRED. AS A RESULT US FIRMS ARE LOSING OUT ON SUBSTANTIAL CONTRACTS BEING AWARDED UNDER HIS PROJECT.

6. COMMENT: APART FROM MEETING WITH ATEEQI AND BOYCOTT CONCERNS OF US BUSINESSMEN, GENERAL ATMOSPHERE THROUGHOUT ALBERT VISIT WAS RELAXED AND FRIENDLY. HIS VISIT KHALED AL-GHUNAIM WAS VERY FRIENDLY AND CLEARLY EXTREMELY PLEASED TO BE HOSTING SPEAKER OF US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. MEDIA COVERAGE WAS FRIENDLY AND NEWSMEN DID NOT ASK DIFFICULT OR EMBARRASSING QUESTIONS. MR. ALBERT, BIPARTISAN, EVEN-HANDED AND DIGNIFIED IN HIS PRESENTATIONS, WAS FOUND BY KUWAITIS TO BE FRIENDLY, GRACIOUS AND EASY TO SPEAK WITH. WE SUSPECT ATEEQI'S STERN LECTURE MAY UNDULY COLOR MEMORY OF KUWAIT VISIT. IN GENERAL IT WENT WELL AND WE THINK WAS A TIMELY REMAINDER TO KUWAITI LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC AS WELL THAT KUWAIT-US RELATIONS ARE BASICALLY GOOD AND THAT WE SHARE MANY IDEAS AND INTERESTS. CONFIDENTIAL

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ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS VISIT, GUEST LISTS, ETC. WILL BE FORWARDED BY AIRGRAM.
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